

Religious and Educational Reforms of Mufti Mahmood as Chief Minister (N.W.F.P)

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ABSTRACT

Late Mufti Mahmood was a person with comprehensive leadership qualities not only confined to politics but having a broader vision of Education, Islamic Jurisprudence, Constitution and Parliamentary affairs, He was not only popular in Pakistan but also the *Ulama* of India, Bangladesh, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia quenched thirst of religious guidance from him.

In short, in his short regime, by bringing Islamic, Social and Education reforms and implementing Islamic Laws, his efforts will always be remembered in future. This research article highlights his good efforts and services in the field of Social, Islamic and Education.

In 1972, Mualana Mufti Mahmood took oath as Chief Minister of NWFP as a result of political accord signed between NAP and Jamiat-ul-Ulama Islam. Mr. Arbab Sikandar of NAP was the then Governor who took the oath from Mufti Mahmood. According to this accord National Awami Party (NAP) made the government in Balochistan with the support of Jamiat, whereas People's Party was the ruling party in centre, Punjab and Sindh.

In the beginning it was a triple alliance, because People's Party was also a part of it. But on account of some provincial differences, the People's Party separated from the alliance. However, in view of the accord, it had

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to implement the articles of the accord with reference to the centre. The cooperation for the formation of coalition government between NAP and Jamiat was conditionally initiated by the Jamiat. Apart from other matters, Islamic demands to be made part of the constitution at the central level and the implementation of Islamic laws at provincial level were also included in the mutual cooperation. In this context Maulana Zahid Rashidi says:

Maulana Mufti Mahmood, as a leader of Jamiat-ul-Ulama Islam, grasped the significance of the opportunity very well. Among the conditions settled for this political cooperation, support with Jamiat in respect of reformulation of the constitution of Pakistan in the national assembly at federal level and the implementation of Islamic laws at provincial level were basic to the agreement.¹

According to this statement of Maulana Zahid Rashidi, surety about full cooperation between the coalition partners for the implementation of the conditions laid down by Jamiat is mentioned in this accord. Since Jamiat contested election under this slogan i.e. the implementation of Islamic Law which was basic to its motto, Mufti Mehmood set some objectives before him as soon as he took over the charge of the office of chief minister in order to achieve his goals about which Maulana Muhammad Zia-ul-Qasmi says:

While accepting the Chief-Ministry of NWFP, Mufti Mehmood set before him three targets:

1. To Islamize the environment of NWFP and to eradicate the social evils.
2. To develop backward areas, to meet their basic needs, and to provide the facilities of life.

3. To ensure easy access to the house of chief minister to all people of the province and to redress their grievances.²

The sincere efforts that Mufti rendered in order to materialize the conditions and achieved targets made in accordance with the agreement in this short period of nine months and half is his historical achievement from the perspective of government reforms. In this respect, Naeem Aasi states:

Mufti took oath as chief minister of NWFP on May 1, 1972. It was the first pleasant experience in the history of the province that the power, be it at provincial level, went into the hands of a religious scholar who did not disappoint the nation. He proved it wrong to think that religious scholars are not meant for the government but for the mosque only. The prominent achievements of his short period of nine months and half speak for themselves. He quickly started working on his political agenda. His reforms proved countrywide so effective, constructive and strong that the whole nation paid a great tribute to him.³

Mufti, within the limits of constitutional provincial powers, constituted a board comprising prominent scholars and law experts for the addition and amendment of provincial laws in accordance with the Islamic Shriah, the announcement of which he himself made on 4th June, 1972 in a "Khatm-e-Nabuwat" Conference in Lahore. He said in this address:

I assure you that whatever powers vested within the limits of provincial government will be fully exercised to eradicate the social evils and non Islamic values. And I announce before you that I have decided to constitute a board of five members comprising three prominent religious scholars and two Islamic-minded law experts.⁴

Of all those announcements made by Mufti after taking oath as chief minister, one of them was that

“A board of religious scholars and law experts will be constituted in order to harmonize the provincial laws in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah.”⁵

The Board was constituted in accordance with Notification No. Legis:2(27)/72 dated 20th July, 1972, and the news about it in the “Daily Mashriq” was:

The government has constituted the board of scholars comprising five members in order to analyze and mould the prevalent/existing provincial laws in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah. Today the chief minister Maulana Mufti Mehmood in his announcement said that he has fulfilled the promise made with the people this year in June in the assembly session.

Maulana Mufti Mehmood said that all the laws of the province will be changed into Islamic laws. And while doing this the experts will take special care of it, so that the individual laws of the different Islamic sects may not be vexed. Rather they will be given full protection. He said further that it is above board that the board will prepare the report on the basis of “Hanfi Maslak” but, wherever necessary, the board will also refer to “Shafi” and “Hanbali” Maslaks too. He said that this board of scholars will categorically submit the report of these different laws which will be placed before the assembly for approval. The head of this board will be Maulana Mufti Mehmood. Other members of the board will be Maulana Shams-ul-Haq Afghani, Shaikh-ut-Tafseer, Islamia University, Bahawalpur, Maulana Yousaf Binnori, Shaikh Madrassa-ul-Arabiah and Islamiyat, Karachi, Mr. Abdul Ghani Khattak, President, High Court Bar

Association, Peshawar, and Khan Amirzada Khan, minister for law and parliamentary affairs NWFP. The Secretary in the provincial department of law will be the secretary of the board.⁶

The laws and reforms that he executed during his regime are as under:

Restriction on wine:

On May 1, 1972, while taking oath in the Governor's House Peshawar, Mufti announced the prohibition of alcoholics and was notified as Notification No.6323 (Exc)-Peshawar, the 5th May 1972. He said:

From today there will be complete ban on making, selling and drinking wine. All licenses issued for the sale of wine stand cancelled from today. No body is allowed to either keep or drink wine. No hotel or club is permitted to possess wine. In this connection the provincial government has been ordered to make a law which will be immediately implemented.⁷

On May 5, 1972, the law of prohibition of wine was enacted.⁸

The announcement of prohibition of wine was not only appreciated by the people of Pakistan but also applauded among the foreign Muslim leaders who paid a great tribute to Mufti. After the creation of Pakistan it was the first step taken with the intention of reforming the society. Dr. Ahmad Hussain Kamal in this connection said:

However, Mufti imposed restriction on wine as soon as he took the charge of official responsibilities. His step was not only welcomed within the country but also highly appreciated by prominent foreign Muslim scholars. Right from the British rule up to twenty five years of getting freedom, this was the first step of the Government of Pakistan taken towards Islam and which was a great step of social reform too.⁹

Restriction on Gambling:

Gambling is the most detestable deed. Like wine it is also a root of ills. All evils spring from these two maladies. The fatal effects of both these diseases have led many nations to destruction and defeat. All the historians, irrespective of their differences, agree that steps taken by Islam to eradicate these evils are exemplary.

It is a matter of great sorrow that there was neither restriction on wine nor on gambling in a country created in the name of Islam. Rather their business was patronized officially on commercial level. Restriction on gambling was also imposed along with wine in the province for the first time by a well known religious scholar, Maulana Mufti Mehmood. And in this connection Muhammad Naeem Aasi said:

This honour was written in the fate of Maulana Mufti Mehmood who chained the “son of lust” {gambling} with the “daughter of vine”. {Wine} And every kind of gambling was declared as sinful. (Parenthesis mine)¹⁰

Ordinance regarding ban on gambling was issued on August 1, 1972 i.e. No. Legis (19) XIX, dated August 1, 1972 and in this connection the news published in the “Daily Mashriq” Peshawar, August 2, 1972, with reference to Mufti Mehmood is:

He {Mufti Mehmood} said that today an ordinance has been issued according to which everywhere in NWFP all kinds of gambling is prohibited. And in this context I have fulfilled the promise made with the people¹¹.

Restriction on interest:

Interest on loan is forbidden in Islam. Having highlighted the fatal effects, the reasons of its prohibition have also been mentioned. Quran

declares that Allah fixes the business lawful where as the interest unlawful, ¹²وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ النَّيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا

Interest and gambling are both such diseases whose evil effects not only destroy the individuals but also adversely affect the nation as whole.

Maulana Abdul Khaliq said: ¹³

Rinse the history of the world; the rise and fall of the nations be studied; the teachings and commandments of the prophets and reformers be brought to the surface, among thinkers two things are unanimously agreed upon: one, due to gambling the nation becomes inactive shirker, and two, interest based economy deprives it of divine blessings. Gambling makes the individuals psychologically hindered and the usury puts the national economy in indolence.

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Maulana Mufti Mehmood imposed restriction on the business of usury in the NWFP. Even the farmers and cultivators were exempted from paying interest on government loans. According to "Daily Mashriq" Peshawar, "Interest is abolished in the province, and in the next fiscal year no interest will be taken on any kind of loan."¹⁴

Mr. Naeem Aasi says: ¹⁵

Mufti, in order to put the country's economy on Islamic track, declared that interest on previous government loans stands remitted. And in future, interest free loans to be given were ordered which gave a big relief to the farmers whom the heavy weight of paying double loans dismayed.*

Dowry Act:

The custom of giving dowry is social cancer, because the girls with no rich dowries are not usually considered to be worthy of being taken in marriage. With the result that they pine away their lives due to lack of

dowries and are not acceptable to any one to get married to them. Mufti like other ills of the society got rid of this evil too. He took help through legislation to eradicate this curse from the society. And his step was not only highly appreciated in the media but the scholars and intellectual demanded from the centre to implement the same restriction on dowry in other province of the country also. Consequently the central government issued an ordinance in order to taboo and curb the custom of dowry. This news was published in the weakly magazine "Tarjuman-e-Islam", Lahore:

The custom of dowry came from the dowry system of Hindus. Innumerable families have to suffer due to this curse, and countless girls have destroyed their future. This evil custom has replaced the simple system of dowry in Islam with black business. No doubt, this is a great step of the NWFP government taken towards reformation of society. And we hope that the same will be implemented in other provinces too.¹⁶

According to "Daily Mashriq" Peshawar, May 14, 1972, Mufti declared that restriction will be imposed on dowry given beyond fixed limits.¹⁷ (17) June 11, 1972, the governor of NWFP by an ordinance No. Legis. 1(15)/72 dated Peshawar, the 10th June, 1972, imposed restriction on dowry given beyond fixed limit.¹⁸ Moreover, show of dowry was also tabooed. And the violators were liable to pay a fine of ten thousand rupees as penalty. Consequently the law regarding the restriction on dowry was legally approved in the provincial assembly on June 24, 1972.¹⁹

Mufti also wanted to limit the sum of dower termed as "Haq-e-Mahar" in Arabic. His statement in the Daily Mashriq" May 11, 1972 was published in these words, "Along with dowry, the limit for dower

(Mahar) is also fixed in order to curb the wrong practice of fixing it according to one's own will. And restriction will be imposed on it if taken beyond its definite limits".²⁰

Ordinance Issued in Respect of Ramazan:

Ramazan is really a reverend and a month of blessings. Muslims observe the rituals of this holy month with great sincerity and solemnity. But there are some unlucky people who publicly disrespect its sanctity and reverence and injure the noble emotions of the true Muslims. Mufti Mehmood during his regime discouraged such violators by issuing an ordinance No. Legis 1(39)/72-Peshawar, the 12th January, 1973 in order to ensure reverence and respect of the month of Ramazan. Mr. Ishfaq Hashmi says:

General Secretary Jamiat, Maulana Mufti Mehmood has added a new shining chapter in the history of Pakistan by issuing an ordinance in respect of Ramazan in the province. Mufti has ordered the closure of all hotels in respect of the holy month of Ramazan. In case of violation, a fine of one thousand rupees and two months imprisonment or both penalties simultaneously is given to the culprits, he declared.²¹

In this connection Gul Nayab Chitrali writes:

Although there is no compulsion in Islam, yet, when Mufti became chief minister, the circumstances were such that the people despite being Muslims did not respect Islamic commands. And keeping the fasts of Ramazan was publicly violated.

Referring to Naeem Aasi, Nayab further says:²²

Mufti, by implementing an ordinance, ordered to keep all the hotels closed during the day in respect of Ramazan. A fine of one thousand rupees and two months imprisonment will be imposed in case of violation of the orders or both of them simultaneously.

According to "Daily Mashriq", Peshawar, and Mufti's government issued an ordinance regarding prohibition on publicly eating and drinking in the month of Ramazan on September 22, 1972.²³

Veil (Pardah) for Women:

Islam has given a high social status to women. Before Islam, women were supposed to be humiliated. They were the victim of every kind of oppression and cruelty and were thought to be the symbol of ill-luck and ill-omen. Islam has fixed the rights of women and also made their fulfillment compulsory on men as women are supposed to observe men's rights. Islam has given them honour and dignity and confined them to fore-walls. By exempting them from external responsibilities they are held responsible for looking after their houses and up bringing their children.

But the blind imitation of the West along with other social and moral evils has also encouraged unveiling and immodesty due to free mixing of men and women. Eastern woman used to be modest but the age of materialism has now unveiled her to the extent of immodesty, and made her a candle of the concert. The whole scenario was in full view of Mufti Mehmood. Therefore, in his regime he took important steps in making it must for women to observe veils. Ishfaq Hashmi states it in these words:

Mufti, in order to protect the rights of women, to stop free mixing of men and women and the moral maladies engendered

from women's unveiling, has made the observance of veil (Pardah) compulsory for women.²⁴

In this context Muhammad Naeem Aasi writes:

When Mufti was blessed with authority and power, he added to his list of virtues by making observance of veil must for women.²⁵

Recommendation for Friday as Official Holiday:

In the subcontinent where the English power tried to eliminate the Islamic habits and customs, there the declaration of Sunday as an official holiday instead of Friday was also included in them. Sunday is Christians' specific day of worship. After getting a free and independent country it was required that all the remains and signs of English power should have been erased, but unfortunately the power of the country went into the hands of such people who were the slaves of the English. They did not have any interest in the religion of Islam and its customs. Emulation of the English to them was excellence and a ladder of development. But when Mufti came to power, weekly holiday was a federal problem. In spite of his limited powers he struggled to get Friday declared as official holiday. Ishfaq Hashmi in this context states:

Maulana Mufti Mehmood got this bill passed from his cabinet that no obstacle be created in observing Friday as holiday instead of Sunday in NWFP.²⁶

Declaring Urdu as official Language.

Pakistan is a multilingual country. Therefore, for the sake of country's solidarity, it is necessary to declare any one language as official which is spoken and understood everywhere. In view of this fact, the Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinah, the founder of Pakistan, while addressing

in a convocation ceremony in Dhaka University on 24th March 1948 said:

If different parts of Pakistan are to be put unanimously on the path of progress, their official language can be only one; and that, in my opinion, is Urdu and only Urdu.

In view of this necessity Mufti declared Urdu as official language of NWFP. On May 10, 1972, he declared, "the official language of NWFP will be Urdu".²⁷ And on June 10, 1972, the provincial assembly issued an ordinance in this regard.²⁸ (Office Order No: S.O(Cabinet) 3-1/72-dated: Peshawar 12th June, 1972). A famous columnist Syed Anwar Qudvai says, "Another important achievement was to be made. By an order all the official correspondence was made in Urdu".²⁹

Official Dress:

The adverse effects of the English civilization and culture were that our nation, due to slavish mentality, deviated from her own culture and became fan of the English civilization. Our nation felt proud in English dress and inferior in its own. Whoever learnt English and appeared in English dress was deemed superior, whereas the commoners in local dress were thought inferior. In this way one class was subject to superiority complex and the other to inferiority complex which gave birth to class difference. And both these classes felt not only distanced from each other but also led to develop hatred against each other. Maulana Mufti Mehmood declared 'Shalwar, Qameez' as an official dress which led to create feelings of equality between the commoners and the high officials. Consequently it led to the creation of love and friendship which replaced alienation and hatred among these classes. This act of Mufti was a heavy blow to the slavish mentality. The orders which he issued in this regard were:" All gazetted and non gazetted

officers must wear 'Shalwar, Qameez'; and this will be the official dress".³⁰

Educational Reforms:

Although Mufti as chief minister had limited powers, yet, in his short tenure, whatever reforms he introduced for young generation to familiarize them with Islamic education proved very effective and useful in removing illiteracy and spreading education in NWFP. And it is this progress in education which is the source of a country's development and stability. In this connection, the following reforms were introduced by Maulana Mufti Mehmood:

1. Admission in the universities and colleges was subject to the reading of the Quran and congregational prayer.
2. Announcement for the establishment of 118 Primary schools in one year.
3. Up-gradation of more than one hundred Primary schools to Middle level and from Middle to High level.
4. The establishment of new Intermediate Colleges in Kulachi and Karak
5. Sanction of a Girls College in Kohat
6. Start of postgraduate classes in Govt. Degree College D.I. Khan and the efforts for the establishment of University
7. In Peshawar, the establishment of a Research Centre to do research work in the subject of Geology
8. Announcement of scholarships amounting to twenty three lac for intelligent and poor students

9. The appointment of Ulama (religious scholars) against the post of Arabic teacher, Theology teacher and Qari teacher in 191 Middle schools.³¹

These were some important steps for enhancing the level of education, and educational facilities were to be provided to the far flung areas of NWFP.*

CONCLUSION:

In short, in his short regime, by bringing Islamic reforms and implementing Islamic laws, Maulana Mufti Mehmood has proved that if the power is given to a religious scholar, he can perform his responsibilities in a much better way.

* Note: Despite efforts some of notifications / office orders in this regard could not be traced in Peshawar Archives OR elsewhere.

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